

After Hearing Dr. Bonsma, It's Hard To Trust Your Own Cows

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MERTZON, Texas — I'm not sure that I wouldn't be a happier man today if Dr. Jan Bonsma, the wizard of the South African cow business, had stayed home and kept his secrets to himself.

Before the doctor struck this section of the state, I had unlimited faith in my boss's bulls. And even though a small percentage of his cows managed to live a chaste life, or at least a non-productive one, I felt that for the most part they were sincerely interested in carrying out the historic role of the female.

Granted, our calf crop didn't win any honors, but by doing a little fancy bookkeeping and ignoring a few dry cows here and there, we generally hit the 90 percent bracket. We blamed our failure to reach the coveted 95 percent (or slightly better) level on the fact that our black bulls object to other bulls' company during the breeding season and the size of several of our pastures require that they operate under a condition of peaceful coexistence.

However, it is of no purpose to dwell on the old days prior to the arrival of Dr. Bonsma. Now we know that right here on this outfit there are no cows that scorn motherhood. And it's possible we have a torito or two who would like to spend the rest of their days romping with steer calves rather than going to work as bulls are supposed to.

Now that we've learned that feminine traits in a bull mean that our cows may start halving their calving, if one of the bulls pauses to smell one of the yellow flowers that cover the country side this spring, the timid torito may well find himself in a packer's corral before sundown.

Our cows suffer the same suspicious scrutiny as the bulls. Even the heavier springers are examined skeptically, and the drier ones have to put up with an invasion of their privacy that would cause blushes of envy among the learned Dr. Kinsey and associates.

As a matter of fact, the only time our confidence returns is when we visit the three barren cows that we put in a separate pasture before the advent of Dr. Bonsma. On these visits we look scornfully at the free-riding trollops (the good doctor could tell they were sterile by looking at their tracks) and exclaim: "Oh yes, you grass-eating followers of non-productivity, you fooled us in 1963 and in 1964. But dear proponents of love without motherhood, before it frosts again in the short grass country your bones will be bone meal, your hide will be a pair of shoes, and everything else from your ears to your dew claws will be resting in a meat counter at the supermarket."

These sojourns among the barren cows are always refreshing. They enable us to face other cattle that can't be trusted as far as we can throw them.